



BULLETIN

from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

FAO CONSULTATION ON A GLOBAL PLAN OF ACTION FOR SEABIRDS

Member countries of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, meeting in Rome, reached agreement on October 29 on an International Plan of Action for Reducing the Incidental Catch of Seabirds in Longline Fisheries.

The plan sets down concrete and specific steps to improve the conservation of seabirds at the national, regional, and global levels, calling for national plans for reducing seabird bycatch in longline fisheries by 2001. Countries are to conduct assessments of seabird bycatch and, if necessary, develop a National Plan of Action.

"This International Plan of Action should establish sound management practices world-wide for reducing incidental catch that impacts both seabird populations and fishing productivity and profitability," said chief U.S. negotiator Terry D. Garcia, Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere. "The United States pressed for and achieved a plan that features the inclusion of suggested measures to reduce seabird bycatch, an assessment process for determining the extent of the seabird bycatch problem, and the implementation of national plans by 2001. Further, the use of regional fishery management arrangements is encouraged to ensure the international coordination regarding reduction of seabird bycatch," Garcia added.

The plan provides guidelines to countries for conducting the preliminary assessment of seabird bycatch in their longline fisheries and in preparing national plans to reduce seabird bycatch. It also provides for a list of alternative measures to reduce bycatch and a means to raise awareness among fishers and fishing associations.

The meeting in Rome has developed an international plan of action for shark management and for the management of fishing capacity. Although all three plans are voluntary in nature, the process of their development is designed to lead to their endorsement by consensus at the FAO Committee on Fisheries Meeting in February 1999 and adoption by the FAO Conference in November 1999. The FAO Consultation in Rome was completed Friday evening, October 30.

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Gordon Helm, Dept. of Commerce 301-713-2370
Albert Manville, Dept. of Interior 703-358-1963

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